CRITICAL DIGEST

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Theatre Diary

Broadway business made a slight recovery, but excess heat and Shriner's convention found only a few shows with complete sell outs. Guys and Dolls returns to 46th St Theatre August 10, and Hazel Flagg will re-open if business warrents, Sept 1.

Current Theatre Reviews- NYC Critics Afield

Canadian Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Ontario. Richard III and All's Well That Ends Well which will alternate performances during the summer are worth the long trip for the ambitious theatre fan, a quartet of NY drama critics agree. Atkinson, Times, Kerr, Herald Tribune, Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, and Sheaffer, Eagle, had slight differences of opinion on the merits of the tent arena productions staged by Old Vic director Tyrone Guthrie and starring Alec Guinness and Irene Worth. Times and Herald Tribune critics were more impressed by the spectacular production of the first play, than by the shallow performances. The other critics were impressed also with Guinness' outstanding portrayal.. Hawkins believes it is the funniest thing the actor has done on either side of the Atlantic. The modern dress version of the second production was cheered by the Broadway critics as a remarkably down performance by a superb acting ensemble. Douglas Campbell was lauded. To Kerr it seems a miraculous revival of an extremely difficult play.

London Report- Graham Greene's The Living Room, is a religious horror play, a fascinating and provocative drama that is at the same time depressing and unhealthy, judges Watts, Post. For all the power and intellectual force in the novelist's first play, the grimness of his pessimism is almost revolting. This story of a Catholic girl driven to suicide through her spiritual torment is, despite its brillant acting and writing, is as ugly an evening in the modern English speaking theatre as has ever been presented, the critic comments.

Strawhat Tryouts

Stock In Trade, an intimate revue directed by Julius Monk at the Bermudiana Theatre, was panned by Leland Hayward in a special review written for Variety. The new-found mugg found the revue far from great with only one member of the cast, Bill Dana, showing slight talent...One Thing After Another, the California Strawhatter's touring revue, was rated light, irreverent, witty summer fare by Lewis, Cue, who viewed it at the Bucks County, Pa. Playhouse...What About Maisie, Ruth and Francis Bellamy's adaption of a short story by Henry James tried out by Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse, seems to miss because the authors try to give the light touch to a grim subject, comments Doul, Variety. 10 year old Roni Dengel was tabbed a promising little actress.

Summer Productions-Brando Dept.

Arms and the Man, the Shaw play chosen by Marlon Brando for a summer circuit tour to give employment to some of his theatre friends, was recommended by Pearson, NBC Critic At Large, and Dias, Variety. The broadcaster, who caught it at Matunuck, R.I. Theatre by the Sea, termed the star's performance excellent. Brando told him that he will go to Europe next month to escape the crass commercialism of Broadway and Hollywood. Variety mugg saw show at Falmouth, Mass, Playhouse and praised Brando's broadly sketched comic portrayal in the smaller role of Sergius.

Village Theatre

The Emperor's Clothes will be presented at Greenwich Mews Playhouse by an inter-racial cast starting Oct 15...The Scarecrow cancelled the 2nd week of its return visit due to light business.Plans are underway for Terese Hayden to continue a play series at Theatre de Lys next Fall and Winter...Murder in Manhatten is next on Originals Only schedule, casting for the 25 member cast has started...Bown Adams Studio Summer Training Program will present Back of the Soul by Bown Adams on July 30-31.

Joan Zell,who plays the Reverend's Wife in Circle in the Square's The Grass Harp,suffered an occupational hazard that could happen to any member of a cast in an arena theatre. She was out of the show 2 days due to a back injury suffered when she tripped over a spectator's leg while making an exit in the darkened arena.

Off Broadway

Burlap Summer Theatre at Club Baron, 437 Lenox Ave is presenting Soul Gone Home by Langston Hughes and The Other Foot by Julian Mayfield Thur to Sun evenings.Maxwell Glanville and Ruth Jett are the producers...The World of Sholom Aleichem, which played 3 weeks at the Barbizon Plaza this spring, re-opens there Sept 11.Cast includes Morris Carnovsky, Howard Da Sylva and Jack Guilford...Noah and the Stowaway by Atra Baer and Martin Kalmanoff is being tested by American Lyric Theatre.

Vaudeville

Eddie White and Colleano head Palace show,plus Capt Vm Meyer,Sheldon & Burnett, Leslie Gaines,Rosales Sisters and Tokayer Troupe.

Radio City Music Hall revue "Alpine Echoes" cheered by trade reporters.Smith, Billboard,has seldom seen a better show in the big house,with emphasis on speed and spectacle.While Variety mugg notes stage show equals"The Bang Wagon" film in tint and trappings.

North Carolina Drama

5 outdoor historical dramas are presented in North Carolina each summer.Bill Hardy, general manager of Horn in the West, presented at Boone,N.C. provided a running review of 4 of them for Variety.

The Lost Colony, opened its 13th season at Manteo. Story of the adventures of Sir Walter Raleigh's settlement attempts has new lighting and sound effects,Hardy reports. Veteran cast members in this year's show include Robert Armstrong,Andy and Barbara Griffith,and Lillian Prince.

Unto These Hills, Kermit Hunter's drama of the tragic effort of the Cherokee to find peace with the white man, opened its 4th summer season at Cherokee with few changes,Hardy notes. More Cherokee's are in this year's cast than ever before.

Thunderland, Hubert Hayes drama of the life and times of Daniel Boone,opened its 2nd season at Asheville. Show has been revitalized in a beautiful forest setting that provides pefect atmosphere for a production that has genuine flavor of the mountains,Hardy sums up. Script has been re-written and N.C. folk singers have been added to the cast.

Horn in the West, which presents Kermit Hunter's story of the settling of Western N.C. opened its second season. Hardy reports changes include professional dancers trained by Harry Coble,replacing the husky football players in the parts.

The Sword of Gideon, is the 5th drama in N.C. and is presented at Kings Mountain for the 3rd season. Hardy hasn't covered this one yet this season.

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Green Room Department

SUMMER MINT...Broadway would be wise to start looking for some side income, suggests Chapman, News, after viewing Business Week's dim figures that the NY theatre industry lost close to $3 million last season. Critic wonders if the summer theatre, which seems to be prospering, should not be coddled and fed current plays. Chapman doubts if local run of Picnic or 7 Year Itch would be hurt if the script was allowed to be produced now in summer theatres..."Hint" is the proper term for today's summer theatres, recommends Armstrong, Variety. Such terms as "barn," "strawhat," "silo" are out of in a business where stars receive as high as 50% of the gross, which sometimes betters $6000 per week.

ANGEL ADVISE...For would be investors who are wondering what shows top backers Howard and Marguerite Cullman are supporting this year, Sobol, Journal American lists—Tea and Sympathy, The Little Hut, The Teahouse of the August Moon, Sabrina Fair, Quadrille and The Prescott Proposals.

TALENT TIPS...If you want to write lyrics for Broadway musicals you must master all the classical forms including the sonnet, the rondeau, and the villanel, Pearson, NBC Critic At Large, surmises after reading "Wonderful Town" lyrics published by Random House...Lilo, Can-Can, who had such a sever case of sunburn that she fainted before a performance, went on when informed that her indisposition would result in cancelling that night's show, reports Gardner, Herald Tribune...Maxie Rosenbloom complained to Wilson, Post, that since Marlon Brando has taken to knitting him, the boxer-actor cannot find any jobs.

HACKS WANTED...The contemporary American dramatist has convinced himself that wooing the muse is a long, private process in which he had better not embroil himself too frequently if he wants to keep his inspiration pure, comments, Kerr, Herald Tribune. Critic wonders if playwrights don't exhaust himself as much by his determination to suffer as he does by the actual production of a play itself. Writers such as Owen Davis were admittedly "hacks", but they did keep quite a few people working in the theatre for a long time.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Stage designs that get the most attention have been, for the past couple of decades, backgrounds before which no normal or even uncommitted human beings could possibly exist, believes Burr, Playbill...Variety, which printed Leland Hayward's review of a summer revue (see page 1) might make a complete reconciliation between producers and critics by getting more managers to try their hand at reviewing.

INTERVIEW HI-LITE...Katharine Cornell expressed a simple formula for audience building to Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor. People who have seen you and liked you will come to see you again, she noted. As the NY theatre public is made up of people from all over the country, the actor who tours, she stated, will find that all his time and effort will be paid back 100%. The star hopes the theatre will develop something to compare in creative excitement with what has been the achievements of Martha Graham in the dance.

Pros & Cons by THK

The pattern of state aid to several of the 5 North Carolina outdoor historial drama bears study by every state and every producer. The systems averts any possible charge of state controlled projects, but insures each production opening on time. The state makes annual loans to local historical Croups to pay initial expenses. This money is paid back by the end of the season. The loans provide hundreds of jobs, plus low-priced, worthwhile productions. The NY area could support several such historical, educational projects.

NYC Theatre News Round Up

Broadway press agents, who have been the victims of the continued decline in theatre employment, have taken matters into their own hands. Having watched the number of shows drop from 200 twenty five years ago to 80 per year, several of them will make their debuts as full fledged producers and playwrights in the 1953-54 season. Under the "Brock Pemberton Rule" of their union, press agents who turn producers can employ themselves as drum beater until opening night. If the show is a hit, they must hire another publicity man to represent them.

The first theatre publicity man to produce his own show next season will be Bill Doll, popular press man for Porgy and Bess and A Night in Venice. Doll will present Basil Rathbone in Sherlock Holmes, a play adapted from the original Arthur Conan Doyle stories by Rathbone's wife, Ouida. It will open in NY the week of October 19. George Ross will be the second press agent trying for a hit next season. He will be co-producer with Edward Choate of Gently Does It, British mystery opening Oct 26 at the Playhouse. Jean Dalrymple, who was co-ordinator on the soon to be released film "MainStreet to Broadway", will be co-producer with Jose Ferrer of the NYC Center drama series opening Dec 11. Wolfe Kaufman, president of the theatre managers and press agents union, will sponsor Mr. Byculia, a mystery play based on Eric Linklater's 1951 novel of the same name. Barry Hyams, whose first attempt to produce The Wrastling and the Fall last season were stymied when a $50,000 check from a prospective backer bounced, will present the Dorothy Monet drama this season. The press agent is also writing a biographical play based on Edna Wallace Hopper, who stole the "Highlights of the Empire" show in May. Peggy Phillips, associate press director of the 3 Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, will see her To Charlie, With Love play presented by Peter Glenn. Jack Whiting will star.

NY theatre men have protested to Congress over the unfairness in the proposed Mason Tax Bill, which would eliminate federal taxes on motion picture admissions, but not on legitimate theatre admissions. But Rep Mason, R-Ill, explains that his bill is aimed at a particular emergency in the motion picture field. Other cuts in amusement taxes will be taken up by Congress later.

Plays

Broadway theatre ticket business is bad, and the Shriner's convention, which brought 125,000 visitors to NY, has not helped...The severe drop in all theatre business, attributed to the annual summer slump, also hit Off Broadway productions... Second week of The Scarecrow at Theatre de Lys was cancelled.

People

11 Porgy and Bess cast members will present Sunday afternoon solo recitals at Carl Fischer Hall...Katharine Cornell will play the lead in The Prescott Proposals, Lindsay and Crouse's new topical drama...The play with the unlikely title Dead Pidgeons will feature Lloyd Bridges...Mary Astor will tour in The Time of the Cuckoo, Eddie Bracken will tour in The 7 Year Itch.

Theatre Book Notes

Bernard Sobel's memoirs of a Broadway press agent will be published by Hermitage House October 27...Kerr, Herald Tribune, is writing "Don't Write That Play" for Simon & Schuster.."Julia Marlowe's Story" , written by her husband E.H. Sothern and edited by Fairfax Downey, will be published in the fall by Rinehart.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

The Taming of the Shrew will be broadcast by NBC Radio Aug 7 from Oregon Shakespeare Festival...Dec 22 date set by NBC TV for first Robert E Sherwood TV script.